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O THOU MIGHTY
RIVER

BY

FRANK D. WOOLLEN

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O THOU MIGHTY RIVER

I sit at my window looking out upon one of the noblest rivers of the world. It is the Autumn of the year, and along the glorious river the hills rise a Persian-vestured host resplendent in a million rainbow banners and emblazoned jewelry. Little villages cluster in white dots here and there, and here and there a burnished spire points a silent finger to heaven. Deepest Tyrian are the skyey depths which arch the visible world, save where a squadron of Jason's snowy galleons float seaward wandering in quest of the unattainable. It all seems more like a dream out of the Arabian Nights than anything real; more like the beatific Elysian Fields than aught of earthly existence.

Water, sky, hills,—profuse and supernal beauty!
Dream within dream. Not a sound to break the spell.
Only the hazy smoke from a distant hearth fire winging its Icarian flight. Only the passing heralds of Life and Death.

Beauty that must die;
And Joy, whose hand is ever at his lips,
Bidding adieu.

For Winter stalks behind. And, then, what shall recall these darling images again? What shall make this transiency abide? What but the magic of that mighty river of Poesy, that mirror which reflects in its bosom the heavens and the earth and all seasons and all hours.

Past ruined Ilion Helen lives,
Alcestis rises from the shades.

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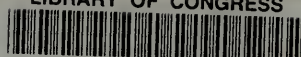
Verse calls them forth; verse revives the asphodels where their feet have trod, and bids the dry-bed Tiber run as before. Poesy, 'that fine excess.' Idea wedded to imagination. Emotion clothed in wings. The radiant butterfly bursting from the chrysalis of thought, beating upward to the blue from the dumb husk. Soul-pouring flood, heaven aspiring spirit that will not be confined and cannot die. The vision and the dream, the flower and the flame, the planting and the fruit, the cherished and the cherishing.

O thou mighty river flowing through the Kingdom of the Blessed since the world began, to whom more than to thee shall we turn for consolation and sustenance and enduring hope? Thou inviolable stream of immortal transport, in which we haggard beings lave our languid bodies and retone our tarnished souls; give us to kneel more often at thy crystal fountains, more nearly to immolate our altars on thy pellucid shrine; and, when the time cometh, and no more shall we hear thy music, nor feed of thy kindly countenance, bear us, O river, on thy majestic bosom to the sea where thou goest, even to the Ultima Thule where our loves have passed before, that we may there also heal us of our grievous wounds.

Of this edition of *O THOU MIGHTY RIVER* fifty copies have been printed by Edwin B. Hill on his private press at Ysleta, Texas.



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